OBITUARY

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. Josef Lissner

The European radiological community has lost one of its most outstanding personalities, who greatly promoted the advances of our discipline over decades. Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. Josef Lissner passed away on 30 December 2006 at the age of 83 years. He had been bravely fighting an insidious disease for several years, which finally defeated him.

For all of us who were close to him during this last period of his life, it was most impressive how realistically and wisely he coped with his deteriorating health condition. He sometimes gave us the impression that it was in fact he himself who had to console us about the inevitably fatal outcome of his disease. Without complaining he subjected himself to multiple surgeries and interventional procedures as well as medications associated with severe side effects.

However, it would not have been Josef Lissner had he given up control over the direction of his treatment. When he finally had to recognize that the disease could no longer be contained, he resigned himself without bitterness. As a deeply religious person, he thanked God for his life full of hard work, outstanding professional accomplishments and personal happiness. Even in the final days and weeks of his illness, he demonstrated an exemplary attitude, an amazing personal integrity and profound wisdom.

Josef Lissner was born in West Prussia and attended medical school at the University of Erlangen, where he graduated in 1951. He underwent his training in both diagnostic radiology and radiation oncology under Prof. Gebauer and Prof. Rajewsky in Erlangen and Frankfurt. In 1960, he presented his habilitation thesis on X-ray image intensifiers. He became associate professor in 1965 and was nominated full professor and chairman of the Department of Radiology of the University of Munich/Klinikum Grosshadern in 1970. In his function as chairman of the Department of Radiology and medical director of the Klinikum Grosshadern of the University of Munich, he was instrumental in establishing one of the largest and most prominent academic radiological centers and university hospitals in Europe and the world. He in fact continued his commitment to our department long after his retirement and even throughout the last years of his life.

Josef Lissner had a very keen sense of the importance of novel technical advances and promoted cross-sectional imaging at a very early stage. He was a visionary in engaging in highly productive partnerships with the medical industry.

As an internationally renowned radiologist, Josef Lissner was President of the Deutsche Röntgengesellschaft (German Radiological Society), member of the Leopoldina, which is the oldest academy of science in Germany, and McPhalen Guest Professor of Experimental Medicine in Glasgow. Moreover, he was an honorary member of more than 12 national radiological societies and the first German to become an honorary member of the RSNA.

In addition, Josef Lissner was instrumental in promoting and augmenting continuing radiological education and scientific meetings on an international scale. He founded the well-known MR International Congress in Garmisch and remained active in its organization even throughout the final years of his life. Moreover, he was one of the founders of the annual European Congress of Radiology and of the journal European Radiology, both of which became hugely successful and internationally acclaimed over the years. He was the first editor-in-chief of European Radiology and laid the groundwork for the journal’s structure and success. Prof. Lissner was awarded the ECR gold medal for his

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achievements and was also made lifetime honorary president of the ECR and lifetime honorary editor of European Radiology.

Despite his severe illness, Josef Lissner always remained an elegant and impressive personality and a sharp observer of the radiology scene, expressing his views in a carefully balanced way, not devoid of self-irony. With this attitude he also chaperoned the transformation of the two European radiological organizations, the ECR and EAR, into the European Society of Radiology (ESR). He greatly contributed to this bold endeavour and carefully protected what he himself regarded as the two most important achievements of his professional life: the European Congress of Radiology and the journal European Radiology.

Josef Lissner was a strong European, but also an open-minded global thinker. Together with his close friend Professor Alexander Margulis, he actively participated in the “International Society of Strategic Studies in Radiology” (ISSSR), which brings together international leaders in radiology in order to prepare for present and future challenges and opportunities in our profession. He was also among the first European radiologists actively participating in the RSNA and creating close ties between European and North American radiology. At RSNA 2006 he was honored with the special RSNA Presidential Award, which he unfortunately was unable to receive in person.

Prof. Josef Lissner leaves behind five beloved daughters, many grandchildren and a spouse, who greatly contributed to making his last years bearable. He will be profoundly missed by all who had the privilege to know him and to work with him. His lifetime achievements have lastingly shaped radiology on a national and international level and will be a continuous remembrance to him.